Adina Williams, Community Engagement Manager, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center

Antonín Dvořák’s Brave New World: A Not So Hidden Link between the Great Czech Composer and the African-American Community

In 1891, Dvořák was sent a telegram from Jeanette Thurber, the founder and president of the National Conservatory of Music in New York City. Ms. Thurber was seeking a well-known composer who could help America establish a national music of its own. Dvořák accepted the challenge and stated publicly, despite heated criticism, that in order to identify its national voice America should look to the melodies of African American spirituals and songs. Antonín Dvořák’s relationship with notable composer and arranger Harry “Henry” T. Burleigh, who was a student at the National Conservatory, was an important one for the Czech composer. Burleigh opened up an entirely new world for Dvořák. It has been speculated that the spirit of the songs Harry Burleigh sang to Antonín Dvořák—the plantation melodies that Burleigh’s grandfather had shared with him as a young man—are interwoven in the work whose premiere was quite possibly the most publicized and celebrated in the history of Western music, Dvořák’s Symphony No. 9 (From the New World).

Tuesday, March 2, 2004, 4:00-6:00pm
MITH, Room B0131, McKeldin Library
The colloquium will conclude with a brief reception and light refreshments.

Adina Williams is the Community Engagement Manager at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland, where she is responsible for developing collaborative opportunities between the Center’s artists and the many communities within the university and the neighborhoods beyond campus borders. A Native Buffalolian, Ms. Williams came to the university from Carnegie Hall, where she served as the original researcher and creative developer for the first listening map of its kind—an interactive, historically-based guide through Antonín Dvořák’s famous New World Symphony. This creative project, developed by Carnegie Hall and PBS, became the pioneering online “Listening Adventure.” Ms. Williams holds a Bachelor of Arts in Music (violin) from Baldwin-Wallace College, a Master of Arts in Elementary Education and a Masters of Arts in Arts Administration—both from Columbia University.

The David C. Driskell Center Colloquium Series features innovative research on Africa and the African diaspora by scholars and practitioners of distinction. When possible, the speaker’s paper or other relevant work will be available through the Driskell Center website <http://www.driskellcenter.umd.edu/programs/2002-2003/colloq> three days prior to the colloquium.

For further information, please call (301) 314-2615 or email <driskellcenter@umail.umd.edu>. 